Boulder Diversity Retreat Summary

The retreat was held on September 8, 2011 at UCAR and was attended by 40 people from five institutions in Boulder County. NCAR Director Roger Wakimoto opened the retreat by welcoming everyone and talked about his personal and NCAR diversity experiences. Unidata Director Mohan Ramamurthy followed with a presentation laying out the current diversity challenges in the sciences, underscoring the importance of addressing those challenges. Following Mohan’s talk, representatives of each of the attending organizations talked about their diversity experiences and activities (The Boulder County representative was scheduled to speak, but could not make to the retreat.) All the presentations can be accessed here (link to the presentation folder).

After a short break, the audience divided into four groups: two focused on internal diversity activities and two on educational and outreach activities of their organizations. A representative from each group reported their discussions (Appendix 1). Before the open discussion, Nancy Wade from UCAR Human Resource announced the UCAR Sponsored Veteran’s Job Fair (Appendix 2). Larry Gehring from Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Colorado Department of Human Services introduced their disability program and resources (Appendix 3). The participants focused on what’s next during the open discussions. Suggestions are listed in Appendix 4.

Appendix 1: Report from the four breakout group discussions

Group #1---internal diversity activities

How do we motivate people to come to internal diversity events?
- It should be a more meaningful experience.
- Is the topic appropriate for the audience?
- Potential attendees will ask themselves, “What am I going to get out of it?”
- How applicable is it to the workplace?
- How applicable is it to the audience?
- Topics should be more defined and less general.
- What are our core values?
- Send out interest surveys.
- Provide suggestion boxes on the topic of diversity.

How do we get management buy-in?
- Create a performance plan.
- Create an organization work plan.
- Is management getting it AND applying it?
- What makes a manager diverse?
- Get managers to lead by example by attending.
- Funding / participation / collaboration
- Depends on how you get your funding, some have more access to funds than others
- Apply for external funding, grants, etc.
- Collaborative sharing of resources, example: share the cost of speaker
- Create sessions for decision makers, what do you see as mission-critical?

Outreach
How can we help locally? Example, Family Learning Center
Be more aware of how we speak to one another. We sometimes unwittingly say something hurtful.

**Group #2 --internal diversity activities**
The group reported that they spent much of their time sharing experiences that were very interesting and worthwhile. Much of their discussion echoes similarly with Group #1.

Challenges – how to engage and raise consciousness.

Outcomes and ideas
- A master list of resources should be compiles for sharing and augment.
- Identify an event to sponsor. Move from organization to organization as a host.
- List of venues we could use to sponsor, address parking issues, transportation issues, video capabilities.

**Group #3 – Outreach**
Girls / women from colleges are not coming.
Are we using the right yardstick to evaluate candidates? Ideas:
- Interview material during interview process re: diversity.
- During interview, have more diverse interview team.
- Advertising jobs in diverse areas.
- Ask employees after five years, why are you still here?
- Housing students together.
- Educate staff on disabilities education / etiquette
- Mentorship
- Sharing candidates / networking with other employers.

**Group #4 – Outreach**
Challenges faced re: outreach
- Educating supervisors / peers about disabilities
- What are other opportunities?
  - SWAP – School to Work Alliance Program
    - Ages 16 – 25 years old transition from school to work
    - Get connected through DVR to increase our diversity
- Recruiting people to Boulder
  - Chicken / egg issue – How can we solve this together?
- Personal discussion – What brought us here and why are we still here?
- Joint sponsorship of events – Be sure this effort reaches as many people as possible.
- Subcommittees from our companies should meet – disabilities, etc.
- Mentoring
  - Help build relationships for new people, professional advancement, mentoring across institutions.
  - Accountability groups / partners
- Introduction to Boulder
  - Share information
  - Introduction to Boulder at recruiting fairs, employee orientation.
  - Share more information rather than just “what’s cool about Boulder”
- How do we make networks and peer groups larger?
- Think about what are our personal biases around diversity? We need to discuss to break down the boundaries.

Appendix 2: Announcement by Nancy Wade, UCAR Human Resources

Veteran’s Fair at UCAR is September 27th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Location: Center Green 1, need more companies to participate
Contact Nancy for more information

March 2012 – UCAR Human Resources will sponsor a speaking from Stir Fry Productions. Nancy will share details closer to the specified date.

Appendix 3: Notes from Larry Gehring, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Colorado Department of Human Services

They are a state agency to assist people with various degrees of disabilities to gain and retain employment. When appropriate, they send students to training / classes for degrees and advanced degrees. Larry coordinates the Business Outreach team. Nate Slattengren works with Federal employers. His key points are
We, as employers, are encouraged to remember these services when we are evaluating our hiring needs.

- There is no cost to employers.
- The unemployment rate is high for people with disabilities.
- Larry also provides customized disability awareness training for employers.

**Appendix 4: Notes the open discussion**

What are the next steps?

- Meet quarterly @ different locations
- Create email alias where interested people can sign up, **NOT** automatically adding all attendees of today’s retreat.
- Share details of events in the area of diversity.
- Get in the habit of sharing information so we can continue to improve our diversity offerings.
- Boulder Diversity Committee to share ideas for a goal this year.
- Identify and share events that are coming up in the near future.
- How do we find a way to diversify the group more?